

MEMBER RECRUITMENT

This section discusses how a sponsor recruits and screens Idaho Reads! VISTA members and how the Corporation recruits, selects, and places "national" recruits through a variety of recruitment activities.

Recruitment of applicants for *Idaho Reads! VISTA* is a major responsibility of the sponsoring organization. As a sponsor, your goal is to attract qualified, skilled, self-motivated individuals. You may recruit directly (locally) or recruit from a pool of qualified candidates recruited nationally by the *Corporation for National Service*. The best approach is to have the sponsor and the *Corporation* recruiting concurrently to increase the chances of identifying the best candidates and to "team" national and local recruits for the strengths each brings to the project.

LOCAL RECRUITMENT

A locally recruited *Idaho Reads! VISTA* applicant is *any* individual recruited by the sponsoring organization. The applicant may be from the local community or may be identified through other sources known to the sponsor, such as college campuses or professional organizations. The local recruit does not have to be from the immediate community served by the project. The sponsoring organization recruits, screens, interviews, and recommends to the Idaho State Department of Education (ISDE) those applicants most qualified for the specific assignment. The sponsor will submit a completed member application form, two references, and the Sponsor Evaluation and Checklist form to the ISDE *at least forty-five days prior* to the pre-service orientation (PSO).

The Corporation State Office is responsible for the final selection of all applicants. After approval, the state office will invite the applicant to the pre-service orientation and arrange for travel.

FINDING POTENTIAL *Idaho Reads! VISTA* MEMBERS

A basic feature of successful recruiting is to "market" your program and *Idaho Reads! VISTA* opportunities to an appropriate audience. You should not wait until the last minute to start your search. To serve in *Idaho Reads! VISTA*, a person must be at least eighteen years of age and a United States citizen, or have permanent resident status.

If you currently have *VISTA* members serving, encourage them to assist in recruiting during their year of service. While they are out in communities, they may get to know people who possess the skills to replace them or who would be ideal for other *VISTA* assignments. Current and former *VISTA* members and leaders are excellent sources for identifying individuals who have the experience and motivation to become members. Discuss with them their reasons for joining *VISTA* and use them to identify individuals with similar motivation.

RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

In recruiting locally, it is important to take your specific needs and match them with groups of potential applicants. With this in mind, you should identify at least three target groups when structuring your recruiting activities. Choose organizations that you feel will get you the most qualified applications possible. Preparation, implementation, and follow-up are the basic steps in planning recruitment activities. Also, work with other *Idaho Reads! VISTA* projects in your area to expand your networking in recruiting members.

Preparation

- ☞ Speak with appropriate liaison staff of each targeted group organization and follow up with a letter.
- ☞ Compile all printed recruitment materials from the Corporation. You can obtain these materials by calling the toll-free number, 1.800.942.2677.
- ☞ Meet with liaison staff and ask them to recommend individuals for *Idaho Reads! VISTA* service.
 - ❖ Ask to place posters in areas such campus career centers and human development offices. The Corporation can supply posters and ads. Recruitment displays can also be sent out for career fairs and other events. Call 1.800.942.2677 and select option four.
 - ❖ Remember, in every instance, to let your audience know when you are visiting the campus, senior center, social service agency, career fairs, businesses with retiring employees, etc...
- ☞ Advertising
 - ❖ Place ads in local or campus newspapers.
 - ❖ Place ads in publications of senior citizen, nonprofit, social service, and professional organizations.
 - ❖ Ask churches and community center to post announcements on bulletin boards and in their newsletters.
 - ❖ Send announcements to job search agencies, college placement and counseling offices, and professional trade journals.
 - ❖ Contact local college radio stations and campus newspapers. They may be willing to conduct an interview with you to explain the opportunities available with your project.

Implementation

- ⌘ A staffed recruitment booth works best. If it is not possible for someone to be at the booth through the activity, try to schedule a block of time when staff will be available to answer questions.
- ⌘ Contact liaison staff members of targeted organizations within two or three days after meeting them to ask if they have spoken to anyone interested in *Idaho Reads! VISTA* service.
- ⌘ When making presentations, be prepared, but do not read a speech. Your goal is to spark interest in your project. Plan to spend time answering questions. At the end of your time, be sure to give your telephone number and invite your audience to visit the project.

Follow-up

- ⌘ Send thank-you letters to everyone who assisted you during the recruitment drive. This will help to generate goodwill and support from those outside your organization.
- ⌘ Schedule interviews with applicants whose skills meet your needs. Remember, don't lead people on during the interview.
- ⌘ After the interviews, review the applications again and make your decision. Keep in mind that you must submit the applications for final selection by the Idaho State Department of Education and then the Corporation State Office before you contact the applicants the Corporation has selected.
- ⌘ Send thank-you/denial letters to those not selected, who you may be interested in re-contacting later. Add that you would like to keep their application in the "active" file.

Looking for Key Personal Qualities

- ⌘ Motivations
 - ❖ Self-starter background.
 - ❖ Community service.
 - ❖ Degree and/or experience.
- ⌘ Commitment
 - ❖ Previous commitments.
 - ❖ Goals not met and why.
 - ❖ Extent of involvement in organizations.
- ⌘ Maturity
 - ❖ Persistence over difficulties.

- ❖ Responsibilities accepted in the past, that were above and beyond the norm.
- ❖ Evidence of adaptability, tolerance, ability to work with a wide variety of people.

RECOMMENDING APPLICANTS FOR SERVICE

Sponsors should recruit additional applicants in order to have backups in the event any individuals drop out before pre-service orientation. Sponsors should submit to the Idaho State Department of Education and Corporation State Office application forms for only those applicants whom sponsors regard as highly motivated and well suited for *Idaho Reads! VISTA* service.

Once you have decided which applicants you want to recommend for service, be sure that:

- ☒ The applicant has fully completed the document.
- ☒ The application is signed and dated.
- ☒ You have contacted references. Let them know that they may be called for additional information.
 - ❖ There must be at least two references: one professional (i.e., job or volunteer supervisor, teacher, or professor) and one other.
 - ❖ Each applicant should complete CNS Form 1420 as part of the *VISTA* Member Application and include a reference list with the completed application.
 - ❖ It is the sponsor's responsibility to collect *at least two* references for locally recruited applicants.
- ☒ The sponsor should provide each reference with CNS Form A-1420 REF. Copies are available from the Corporation State Office.
- ☒ The applicant is a US citizen or permanent legal resident.
 - ❖ If the applicant is a legal resident without US citizenship, the applicant must attach to the application the type and expiration date of his or her visa and registration number.
- ☒ The applicant is at least eighteen years of age; there is no upper age limit.
- ☒ Gaps in personal or employment history are accounted for.

Before you forward the original AmeriCorps*VISTA application to the Corporation State Office, be sure that:

- ⌘ The above seven steps are completed.
- ⌘ The applicants know that the Corporation State Office, not the sponsor, makes the final selection decision.
- ⌘ The sponsor reference is completed and signed.
- ⌘ At least two completed personal references are attached. Incomplete applications and missing reference sheets will delay that applicant approval process.

What happens in the Corporation State Office:

- ⌘ Applications are reviewed for eligibility and suitability.
- ⌘ References are reviewed; on occasion, they may be called for additional information.
- ⌘ *Idaho Reads! VISTA* supervisors are notified in writing of those applicants approved by the state director.
- ⌘ At that point, the sponsor can give official notice to the applicant.
- ⌘ A formal invitation to a pre-service orientation is extended by the Corporation State Office, along with training materials and the AmeriCorps*VISTA Handbook.
- ⌘ Applications are made part of the permanent file in the state office. Projects should retain a copy of the file for their records.